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Nyakyusa

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AN INTRODUCTION TO NYAKYUSA SOCIETY

By GODFREY WILSON

128 This paper is an attempt to give an outline of the pagan culture of the Nyakyusa people of South Tanganyika[1] in relation to the three fundamental groups into which their society is articulated—the family, the age-village and the chiefdom. Every Nyakyusa belongs to some family, to some age-village, to some chiefdom; and in his membership of these three groups is comprehended most of his behaviour.

121 Sociology is the objective study of human relationships which, as they only exist in men's activities, can only there be studied. The systematic investigation of culture, of the common economic, ceremonial, legal, religious and other activities which obtain among some group of people, is the sole possible method of discovering the system of human relationships which makes of the group a society. It is only by viewing all the facts of culture in the light of the relationships of the people concerned that we can see the full objective significance of those facts, it is only so that we can see the body or actuality of those relationships. For human relationships are the most inclusive facts of social life, they are the form[2] which the sociologist seeks for in the matter of his special field; whether he is engaged in description, or in the functional analysis of a single culture, or in the comparative analysis of several cultures, human relationships are always his goal, which he must reach if his account of fact is to be coherent, if his explanations are to be complete.

The method adopted in this paper is that of Professor Malinowski and his followers; it involves a repudiation of the one-sided Durkheimian concept of "social integration" or "solidarity," and a realization that culture, consisting as it does of human behaviour with a human meaning, has a material reality which makes possible and conditions the human relationships that integrate it and give it form. This point is elaborated in the concluding section.

128 In order to make Nyakyusa society into a wholly lucid unit, intelligibly comparable with other societies, it would be necessary to undertake a complete functional analysis, and to explain in detail why it is that different members of this group on different occasions generally conform,

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[1] I am greatly indebted to the Rockefeller Foundation for the Fellowship which makes my investigation possible.

[2] By "form" is meant, not a sensible pattern, but an intelligible system of fact.

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128 as they do, in their behaviour and their mutual relationships to a common type. Space forbids such an undertaking here; and it is necessary to emphasize that, although the most significant facts are described in an orderly manner, and although certain reasons for these facts are indicated in their specific character and in their connections with one another, yet these reasons are not fully or systematically worked out, and the result is a description which leaves the facts only half-explained. And, in so far as this society is not here fully analyzed, so it is not yet fully comparable with others. The reader of this paper will detect many points of similarity and of difference between Nyakyusa society and some other with which he is familiar, but the comparison cannot be made to yield any propositions about the nature of human societies in general until the facts of both have been fully explained in terms of their particular social, cultural, and external conditions.

Climate, Cultural Groups, and European Contact.

101 131 133 The Nyakyusa live in the Rungwe District of South Tanganyika in the Rift Valley at the head of Lake Nyasa. The valley is dominated and closed at its North end by the recently extinct Rungwe volcano, from whose foot the land, starting as an upland plateau 5,000 ft. above sea-level, tumbles southwards for twenty-five miles in a broken cascade of hills, to level out in a plain fifteen or twenty miles from Lake Nyasa. The Lake is 1200 ft. above the sea. The East wall of the Rift rises to 10,000 ft. or more in the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains, but the West wall is two [132] or three thousand feet lower. The climate is very wet, for about 130″ of rain fall each year, and, at 9° South of the Equator, is also very hot. [116 731] The rain and the sun together make the land extremely fertile; the district is thickly populated (over 100 to the square mile), famine is rare and the Nyakyusa are far better fed than most of their neighbours. Rice 177 241 was introduced into the plain by Arabs, coffee by the German Missionaries in the hills, and these two crops to-day, under the enthusiastic care and guidance of the Government Agricultural Department, bring to many Nyakyusa a small but steadily increasing cash income.

262 241 Their main foods are bananas, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and a variety of greenstuffs, together with meat and curds from their cattle. Millet is extensively grown and is used both for making beer and for eating in the form of porridge.

101 The name *Nyakyusa* is nowadays used by themselves as a general name for all those who have similar speech and customs and who live in Tanganyika; but formerly it only covered those who live in the South of the district, in the plain and up in the hills as far North as the administra-

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tive capital, Tukuyu, and it is still thus used to distinguish this group from others. This group will here be referred to as "*Nyakyusa proper.*" Those in the North of the district to the West and East of Mount Rungwe call themselves *Kukwe* and *Mwamba* respectively, and there is a group of chiefdoms to the East, under the Livingstone Mountains, called *Selya*. All these four groups share a common culture, distinguished by minor local peculiarities of dialect and custom. Immediately bordering the Nyakyusa to the South West are the *Ngonde* (Europeanized as "*Konde*") in Northern Nyasaland; they belong to the same cultural group but are distinguished by greater differences of custom and speech than the others. I have not yet visited them.

In the hills to the West of the Rift live the *Ndali*, who are included in this administrative district; and on the plateau under these hills, to the West of the Kukwe, live the *Penja*. Both these small groups have old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. But they are now rapidly being assimilated to the Nyakyusa both in speech and in law.

I use the name Nyakyusa, in accordance with modern usage, to include the Nyakyusa proper, the Kukwe, Mwamba, and Selya groups, but to exclude the Ndali, the Penja, and the Konde. The Nyakyusa together with the Ndali and Penja number 150,000; the Konde of Nyasaland 30,000.[3]

Members of the Berlin and Moravian Missions were the first Europeans to settle in the district, where they have lived now for forty-five years and have made numerous converts. The German Administrators followed them closely, and later came a few planters. But pronounced economic change is a matter of the past five to ten years during which time the Lupa Gold Fields of South Tanganyika have been opened up and have employed increasing numbers of Africans on the diggings. During the past few years the young men of the Nyakyusa have developed the habit of going for a few months, now and again, to the Gold Fields to earn money for tax and clothes. They seldom stay more than six months at a time, often only one or two; so that their absence does not cause the same difficulties in their own community that are found in other areas where the men spend longer periods away from home.

The Family, together with a sketch of wider Kinship Groupings

The relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling are continually visible in the culture of the Nyakyusa. The

[3] Government Census figures.

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593 holding of land and the economics of life in general, the rules and procedure of law, the emotional forms of ceremony, the dogma, rite, morality and symbol of religion, the forms of knowledge and opinion—all are interpenetrated by these relationships.

593 595 The word *family* is used in this paper to mean the organized group of a man, his wife or wives, and their children of any age, but not to include any other relatives. A Nyakyusa family, as we shall see, does not become extinct when the father dies; his younger full-brother or his senior son steps into his place and the group continues very much as before. In this society families are sometimes monogamous, sometimes polygynous; and, in consequence, two more relationships with which we are not familiar in our own culture are included in the Nyakyusa family; one is the relationship of co-wives and the other is that of half-siblings. Within a ploygynous family the different wives and their respective children form groups to some extent distinct from one another; and the term *individual family* is here used to denote the group of a man, one wife and their children, whether that group is part of a polygynous family or forms a complete monagamous family by itself.

593 595 601 The Nyakyusa themselves have no separate word for either of these small groups; the word *ekekɔlɔ* is sometimes used in the restricted sense to which we have here confined the word "family," but more usually means the whole of any single person's recognized blood kindred, living or dead, both in the male and female lines; and it is translated in this paper as *kindred*, *kinsfolk*, or *kinsmen*. They also have a word *ovokamu* which includes the whole of any one person's *ekekɔlɔ* together with all his recognized affines, and this is here translated *relatives*. The term *affines* is used to translate the Nyakyusa word *avakɔ*, which is identical in meaning with it.

[585] [435] 436 Marriage is legally effected by the handing over of four to thirty cows, together with one or two bulls, by the groom to his wife's father. And this transfer of cattle is the key to the whole Nyakyusa system of blood and affinal relationship. Cattle have a very high value because of their production of milk and meat, which are the most highly prized foods, and because of their scarcity; they are in constant circulation, and by their movement from one man to another they forever create and maintain the bonds of kinship and affinity. Cattle circulate rapidly; few except chiefs have more than six cows in their herds at any one time, more often each man has only two or three, while some have no cows at all; and yet every mature man has paid out, for his own and his sons' marriages, five, ten or twenty times the number of cattle that he at

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present possesses. A young man is given cows by his father and sends them to his father-in-law; his father's income in cattle is derived partly from the increase of his own stock, but chiefly from the marriages of his own and his brothers' sisters and daughters, for it is the custom for full-brothers and half-brothers to given one another cows as their daughters and sisters get married; the young man's father-in-law gives the cows which he receives some to his brothers, some to his sons, and some he keeps himself. And thus, continually, the cattle are driven down the paths of human relationship. 436

The passage of cattle makes the children of a marriage legitimate and members of their father's family; the sons can inherit from their father, and the daughters, when they marry in their turn, bring cattle to him. But if a woman bears a child to a man who has given no cows for her, the child is illegitimate, has no right of inheritance anywhere, and belongs either to her husband or father, not to its own biological sire. 585 848

Getting married is not a single event; the marriage-cattle are seldom handed over all at once, but in ones, twos, or threes over a period of years; and a girl very commonly goes to visit and sleep with her betrothed husband, from time to time, for several years before she finally sets up house with him and begins to bear his children. There are three ways of getting married: (1) by negotiation with the girl's father (2) by running off with an unmarried girl (3) by running off with a married woman. The first is the ideal, socially approved, method and is not uncommonly followed. The negotiations often begin while the girl is still an infant, sometimes even before she is born; the man sends one or two cows to her father to bespeak her (*okosingela*). These cows are counted as part of the marriage-cattle (*engwela*) and the girl is henceforth called his "wife," but she lives at home with her parents. Sometimes a boy is betrothed by his father while he himself is still young, but always, I think, to a girl several years his junior. Such betrothals are determined by the friendship of the two families. A girl who is bespoken in infancy does not, ideally, go to live altogether with her husband till after she has reached puberty and passed through the elaborate initiation which then takes place. But there is an intermediate period when, from the age of ten or earlier, she is allowed to visit and sleep with her husband from time to time. The man sends a bull or a hen to her father to ask for his wife (*okosombolela*), and the old man agrees to let her go on occasional visits. But she is seldom allowed to go until at least three cows, in all, have been received for her. She is not supposed to be deflowered before puberty and she and her husband always, at first, practise limited intercourse without penetration. Not infrequently, however, full intercourse 583 584 836

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583 takes place on some occasion and her parents usually find out when it
584 does. In some families the girl's mother examines her after each visit to
836 her husband to see if the hymen is intact, sometimes the girl tells her mother herself. When her father hears about it his action is determined partly by his feelings towards his son-in-law, partly by his need for cattle. Sometimes he does nothing at all; occasionally he sends back the cows he has received for his daughter and breaks off the marriage, and this is particularly likely to happen if the girl has been forced against her will or generally ill-treated. More usually, however, he sends his daughter to live with her husband saying: "You have made her a woman yourself, you must pay the rest of the marriage-cattle quickly."

836 We have no evidence to suggest that the girls in any general way dislike sleeping with their husbands before puberty, rather the reverse; and the men say: "It is good, it accustoms a girl to her husband." But some girls dislike the particular men to whom they are betrothed.

881 The initiation of a girl at puberty lasts for some months and includes several exchanges of food between her family and that of her husband, and a number of ceremonies in which both her girl friends of the same
[584] village[4] and her husband's friends from his village[4] participate. If a girl is not bespoken before puberty the initiation is still carried out in a modified form, but its full significance is lost.

585 Soon after her initiation a girl, if she has been bespoken, goes to live altogether with her husband, to play her part in his economy and to bear him children. If only a few cows have been received for her, her father insists on one or two more being handed over before she is allowed to go. At some time, perhaps during the girl's initiation, perhaps years later, the final marriage ceremony (*okokwa*) takes place. The balance of the marriage-cattle are brought to her father by the husband and his village neighbours,[4] her "mothers" prepare a great deal of food for the guests to eat, there is dancing, feasting and great excitement.

554 The number of cows handed over varies with the wealth and social
583 status of the two families concerned. Six to ten cows is the most usual number, but sometimes as few as four or as many as thirty change hands.

583 The second method of marriage is adopted when a man falls in love with a grown girl, who is not bespoken, and cannot find the cows to satisfy her father at once; he runs off with her and regularizes the position
583 later by sending cattle. The third method is adopted when a man falls
837 in love with a married woman and has cows available; he runs off with

[4] Vide infra "The Age Village" [p. 269, col. 116—Analyst]

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837 her and then returns to her first husband the cows he had given for her with two in addition as adultery fine. But this return is usually made only after the first husband has brought a lawsuit against him.

837 Adultery is extremely common now-a-days; when a man runs off
684 with, or is discovered seducing, a married woman and has not enough
177 cows to marry her, he is legally compelled to pay two cows for the adultery to her husband. In pre-European days an adulterer, if caught, was usually punished by the husband and his neighbours with death or extreme torture, and the old men tell me that adultery was then a rarer event.

584 The extent to which a girl is usually allowed to choose whom she
177 will marry is difficult to guage, and varies in different circumstances. Opportunities of meeting and flirting with young men at dances and ceremonies are frequent; and the older men say that, owing to the abolition by the Europeans of the old severe punishments for adultery, girls
[582] are freer now than they used to be, for their lovers no longer fear to run off with them if they are married or bespoken (which is in Nyakyusa law very much the same thing). The custom of betrothing infant girls is, they declare, less common than it used to be; they are now more chary of pledging their daughters "for when they grow up they just run off with someone else." A girl's choice is, however, limited by the necessity of finding a lover who has cows, and few young men have enough to secure her if she is already married, though they may have enough to pay an adultery fine.

[428] Owing, in part, to the laws of inheritance, by which a commoner's[5]
593 full-brother inherits before his son, it is the older men who control the cattle. Every bachelor is largely or wholly dependent on his own father (or his dead father's heir) for the cows for his first marriage, and he must hoe his father's fields for many years before he is given enough to secure a wife and to set up a family of his own. Economic reciprocity is an element in most human relationships, and it enters into the Nyakyusa relationship of father and son. It is well understood, in this society, that
593 after a certain length of time spent hoeing his father's fields a young man
685 is entitled to some cows, if his father has any; and if his father delays too long the young man either stops hoeing for his father or else he takes legal action and enforces his claim. Between father and son such law cases are rare, but they are frequent between a young man and the brother of his father who has inherited his father's wives, property, and position in the family.

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[5] The laws of inheritance for a chief are, in certain respects, different; vide infra, "The Chiefdom."
2 A [Cat. 116 pp. 278ff. --Analyst]

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583 Normally a bachelor is given cows one by one, over a period of years, and, as we have seen, he sends them, as he receives them, to the father of the girl he wants to marry. One cow is sufficient for betrothal, but not until he has given three can he begin openly to sleep with her. And he cannot usually set up his own economy until he has given at least three cows and she has reached puberty and been initiated. He may of course bespeak an already grown girl, but if he engages himself to a young one he is expected to bring two or more bulls as well, during the course of her initiation.

684 If he chooses to spend his cows in adultery fines, he may, but he will then have to wait longer to get married.

582 561 Thus the system of marriage by a transfer of cattle is, in this society, directly linked with a late marriage age for young men and with a privileged position for older men. When a boy gets cattle he at once gives them to an older man in order to secure his daughter as a wife; the labour of every bachelor helps to increase his father's wealth in food; it is in general the older men alone who can afford more than one wife. And there is an average difference of ten years or more in the initial marriage age of men and girls. The tax registers show in part of the district, among 3,000 [162] adult* men, 34% bachelors, 37% monogamists, and 29% polygynists; and investigation proves that, generally speaking, it is the young men who are bachelors, the men over forty-five who are polygynists.

511 574 Though cattle are their most valued form of wealth, it is on agriculture that the economy of the Nyakyusa is primarily based. Meat and milk are luxuries, and daily bread comes from the fields. Hard work in a fertile country provides food for each family, and the millet beer which is the ordinary material of hospitality. Hospitality brings a man prestige and authority among his fellows; on the possession of sufficient food largely depends the contentment of his wives. And in the production, preparation and eating of food the relationships of the family and of the individual family within it, are clearly visible.

241 512 Hoeing is the work of men, planting, weeding, reaping and cooking is the work of women. The men, young and old, hoe for about four hours on most mornings of the year; in the lower altitudes they begin well before sunrise and finish about 9 a.m., on the upland plateau they begin later and continue till noon or beyond. The energetic ones sometimes hoe again for an hour or two in the late afternoon. Different

*Presumed to be 18 years or over.

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crops are planted at different seasons of the year so that there is always some hoeing to be done.

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In a polygynous family each wife has her own fields (*embaka*), hoed by her husband and her own sons, which she plants, weeds and reaps with the help of her own daughters, and the produce of which she uses to cook for her husband, her own children and herself. The relative rights of husband and wife to dispose of produce vary with different crops, but no co-wife has any rights over a woman's food. She may, and often does, ask her co-wives to help in her fields and sends them presents of cooked food from her own fire, she may help them and receive presents in return; but they have no rights over her fields or her food, only her husband and herself. And the fields which are hoed by a bachelor son belong to his own mother, who in her turn cooks food for him to eat.

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Each wife has either a hut to herself, or else a separate alcove in a large hut, and there she has her fire for cooking. She fetches her own firewood and water or sends an unmarried daughter for them.

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At meals the ages and the sexes eat separately; in some polygynous families each wife sends a dish to the husband, in others the wives take it in turns to cook for him. The husband eats alone or with neighbours of his own age[7] to share his dish, the older boys and their friends[7] eat separately from the younger children, and each mother again usually eats with her own daughters, apart.

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In the relationship of husband and wife the chief elements are sexual intercourse, co-operation in work, the procreation of children and factors of personal inclination, character and temperament. By men women are praised for sexual skill, cleanliness and beauty, for good cooking and hard work, for their fecundity, and for gentleness of speech and behaviour, and those with opposite qualities are criticized. Among women men are praised for sexual skill and attentiveness, for vigour in hoeing and skill in house-building, and for kindness; while sexual neglect, laziness, impotence and cruelty are disliked and may cause a woman to leave her husband for another man.

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The birth of children is a most important factor in the marriage relationship, for children are greatly desired both by men and women. They are desired for themselves and also because they bring their parents wealth and prestige; a boy will one day work in the fields of his father and mother, a girl will bring in cattle from her marriage. And the possession of children brings compliments and respect both to man and woman.

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[7] Vide infra "*The Age-Village.*"

[Cat. 116, pp. 269 ff. — Analyst]

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842 595 581 Impotence and barrenness are well known facts, and magic is much used to cure them; but apart from their operation it is believed that each conception directly depends upon the frequency with which a man visits his wife. And thus the bearing of children is, for a woman, a demonstration of her husband's great affection for her. People adduce the number of children that a woman has borne to prove, in conversation, that she is her husband's favourite.

595 Polygyny is the ideal of every pagan Nyakyusa; a plurality of wives is necessary, in this society, for full sexual satisfaction, wives bring a man wealth, prestige and authority, the more wives he has the more children, he thinks, will be born to him.

853 831 It is believed that any contact with the sexual fluids is dangerous to a young child's health, and so, after a woman has borne a child, her husband is supposed wholly to refrain from intercourse with her for about a year, until the child is old enough to play by itself and allow its mother time to wash in the mornings before touching it. Then he may begin to visit her again, but still she must not become pregnant until the child is weaned, "If she does her breasts become rotten" and the first child is harmed. 1833 862 As children are not weaned for two or three years, this rule involves the couple in yet another year or more either of *coitus interruptus* or of infrequent intercourse (which also is believed to avoid conception). 595 These taboos on intercourse after a child's birth are to some extent observed in practice, and are one of the reasons for polygyny among the Nyakyusa.

464 595 Another reason is the absence of hired labour. With a few minor exceptions the only way a man can increase the supply of labour at his disposal is by marrying more wives. Polygyny is the mark of a wealthy man, conditioned by his control of cattle, conditioning his supply of food. And the cattle spent in marriage come back again with interest as the polygynist's daughters begin to be betrothed and married.

595 It is extremely common for a man to take as his second or third wife the sister, half-sister, or brother's daughter of his first or second wife. By doing so a man pays a great compliment to the wife whose sister, or niece, he takes and to her family; his action implies complete satisfaction with her and friendship with her family. He sends his wife home "to fetch out (her kinswoman) into the open" (*okosakola*); but she will not agree to do so unless she approves of him as a husband, and so, if she does agree, her action likewise compliments him. I know of one case in which a man wished to take his second wife's younger sister in this way,

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but his wife refused to go and fetch her on the ground that he was a bad husband. 595

The children of one man and two close kinswomen have almost the relationship of full-siblings, but not quite, and I propose to call their relationship that of *linked half-siblings* (*vide infra*). 593

In a polygynous family the first wife married, the chief wife (*oŋkasi-kolo*), is in a privileged position; she is entitled to the respect and obedience of her co-wives and her eldest son is her husband's ultimate heir. A man cannot lightly divorce his first wife during his own father's lifetime, for while the other wives he obtains by his own efforts, with his own cattle, she is married with cattle given him by his father, who must be consulted before she is divorced and who is offended if she is sent away without good cause. 595 586

Besides the chief wife there is, in most polygynous households a favourite wife (*oŋkondwe*), who in fact has greater privileges. Ideally a man is supposed to be fair to all his wives and to distribute milk, land and sexual attentions equally between them, with perhaps a slight bias in favour of his chief wife. But usually one wife is her husband's favourite and is given by him an undue share of the household's milk supply, and sometimes he hoes more land for her than for the others, as well. 595

Divorce is legally effected by the return of the marriage-cattle. No pagan woman in this society ever desires to live single, and so when a wife leaves her husband it is always with the intention of marrying some other man. Usually she has a particular man in mind who has been making love to her and who has cows enough to redeem her, but not always. A woman may, as we have described already, run off with a lover and then, as soon as he has returned the marriage-cattle and the adultery fine to her former husband, she becomes his legal wife, and her children by him are legitimate. If she has no lover to run off with, or if her lover wishes to avoid the adultery fine, the woman goes to Court[8] (before 1926 she went to her own chief) and publicly refuses to live with her husband. She may or may not give a reason for leaving him, but if she persistently refuses to go back to him there is now no way of compelling her to do so. The judges say to her: "Well you must find the cattle," and so she stays, either with her father or in the charge of a court official, until some man comes to marry her. Then the cows are returned to her first husband and the divorce is effected. In pre-European times, I am told, such a woman was frequently compelled to return to her husband by 586

[8] *Vide infra*. The Chiefdom. ✱
✱ [Cf. 116, pp. 278 ff. — Analyst]

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586 her own father and the chief. A man has the right to divorce his wife, that is to send her away and demand back his cows, if she is dirty or lazy in housework or if she commits adultery, but men do not often demand a divorce for adultery unless it is persistent. If a man sends his wife away for some such reason she returns to her father and he, if he has cows available, sends back to her husband his marriage-cattle, if he has not got the cows the husband must wait until the girl is remarried.

593 857 Into the relationship of mother and daughter economic co-operation and reciprocity enter. The care of young children is largely in the hands of their elder sisters, and the girls also help their own mothers in field-work and in fetching and carrying. In return their mothers cook for them, teach them how to cook themselves and how to make mats.

585 593 Each mother is responsible also for her own daughter's virginity. One of the bulls which a young man brings during the initiation of his betrothed wife is only given if the girl is found on examination to be still virgin, or if he has deflowered her himself. If it is given this bull belongs to the girl's mother to eat with her own friends. But, in spite of her [864] mother's responsibility for her, a girl learns nothing positive from her mother about sex, but from her own slightly older friends; with them she discusses the technique of love-making in detail, but never with her mother.

593 The relationships of siblings are, in general, closer than those of half-siblings, and the eldest son in each individual family is privileged above his brothers. A boy's claim for cattle is, as we have seen, partly based on the time and energy he has put into hoeing his parents' fields; but it also depends, in part, on having full-sisters of his own. When a girl marries the cows come to her father, but her own full-brothers expect to receive these cows, in time, for their own marriages, in the order of their age. Though the father controls the cattle the brothers speak of them as "our cows" and they have an ultimate legal claim to them, which only gross laziness or insult to their father can altogether vitiate. The eldest of a group of full-brothers is the first to draw on these cows and to marry, his juniors wait longer. Full-brothers are bound together in many ways; the eldest, who is privileged, is bound to help his juniors in any way he can, and they in turn respect him and in time give to him some cows from the marriages of their own daughters; 593 and each makes the others' quarrels his own. What chiefly unites them 428 is the law of inheritance, for though the eldest has first right to the cattle from their sisters' marriages, and though the younger ones, later in life, give cattle from their daughters' marriages to him, yet they are his heirs, and all his privileges in time pass to them. When the eldest dies his next

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full-brother steps into his place, takes his wives, huts, land and cows and looks after his children; after him the next full-brother inherits and so on, until, when all are dead, the property and wives of each pass to each one's senior son.[9]

The heir has exactly the same obligations to his predecessor's children that the dead man had himself while alive, but frequently he has less will to perform them; and his conformity is often only assured by the pressure of legal and religious sanctions.

This rule of inheritance is part of a more general fact, which is that, in Nyakyusa society, death does not break a family and its relationships, but simply alters the particular people between whom these relationships obtain. Only rarely does death leave a man or woman widowed, or a child orphaned; nearly always some one is at once substituted in place of the one who has died. When a woman dies young her parents are bound either to give another daughter to her husband or else to return the marriage-cattle to him so that he can obtain another wife; when a man dies his wives and children are not left alone but taken by his heir. If the heir is a brother he takes all the women as his wives, if a son he builds a separate hut for his own mother and takes the others. And the heir is now "the father" of the dead man's children. Even when a man and all his full-brothers are dead the families of each are still united for some purposes under the leadership of each one's senior son (eldest son of chief wife). The senior son is now called "father" by his siblings and half-siblings, he is religiously responsible for them all (*vide infra*), he normally exchanges cows with the eldest brother in each individual family (*vide infra.*), he is entitled to their respect and obedience.

Half-brothers may, or may not, be linked especially closely together. They may, as we have seen, be linked by blood when their two mothers are either sisters or close kinswomen, they may also be linked by an exchange of cattle, by "milking each other's cows" (*okokamanela*). Each group of full brothers regards the cows that come in from the marriages of their sisters as their own cattle, but the father disposes of these cattle as he wishes. If he gives some of their cows to a half-brother, he thereby creates between the eldest of the group and this man the special relationship of "milking each other's cows;" and it is expected that the cows given will in time be returned by this half-brother from the marriage-cattle either of a full sister or of a daughter of his own. And the exchange once begun goes on; as their sisters and daughters marry

[9] This refers to commoner's inheritance only.

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593 they continually give each other cows; between their respective sons also the exchange usually continues, but between their grandsons it lapses.
593 686 Reciprocity is expected and can be legally enforced, but it is not insisted upon so long as the two men concerned are friends, and its legal enforcement at once breaks the relationship. If two such half-brothers (or their sons) quarrel, one may take legal action for "separation" (*okolekana*) against the other. The cows that have been handed over by both sides since the beginning of the relationship (perhaps twenty or thirty years before) are counted up, and one or the other is ordered to pay over the balance to make the numbers equal. After this the two are "no longer kinsmen," they have no mutual obligations and do not attend each other's funerals.

593 428 It is usual for a father to create this relationship between his senior son and the eldest of each group of full-brothers, so that by this exchange of cows the family is held together. The linkage of half-brothers, whether by blood or by "milking each others cows," is important in inheritance. If a man with no full-brother dies and leaves no sons, or sons too young to inherit, then the inheritance passes to a linked half-brother; to a half-brother linked by blood if there is one, if there is not then to one linked by exchange of cows.

771 Religion enters continually into family life and helps to maintain wider kinship bonds also. The Nyakyusa religion falls, broadly, into three parts: The Ancestor cult, Witchcraft and Magic. Taken as a whole their religion, as they believe, secures for them many of the most important values of life, health, good crops and success in various enterprises; it provides an intelligible explanation of death and misfortune by tracing them to the ill-will either of the ancestral spirits or of living men acting through witchcraft or magic; in its rituals it resolves fear and replaces it by hope and confidence; while the believed destructive action of the ancestors and of men is generally, though not entirely, linked with morality.[10] The commonest explanation of misfortune is that some wrong done by the victim, or by his close kinsman, has provoked the spirits or his fellow men to anger.

769 753 As long as a man has alive a father, a father's full-brother, or a senior brother or half-brother[11] of his own, this senior kinsman deals with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children; and health is the chief value which his prayers are believed to secure for them. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal is

[10] cf. Godfrey Wilson. "An African Morality." *Africa*. Jan. 1936.
[11] Provided the relationship between them has not been legally broken (*vide supra*.).

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ever made to the spirits, but when some member of a family or his wife or child falls sick the anger of the spirits is often suspected as a possible cause. There are usually other reasons suspected as well, and so the sickness is taken to a diviner for diagnosis. Various causes are suggested to the diviner and he selects one among them. If the anger of the spirits is selected then this senior kinsman must pray for the one who is sick, if he is to recover. When half-brothers live at a distance from one another, after their father and his brothers have died, then each may pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness in his own family but if the sickness persists then a message must be sent to the senior kinsman. And, as the anger of the spirits is due to wrong doing, the sinner must reform his ways as well.

The wrongs which rouse the spirits to anger are usually breaches of family morality. If a son does not respect his father or insults him, if an heir neglects to feed and provide for the dead man's children, then when sickness falls on him or his own children it will probably be traced to the anger of the spirits at his behaviour.

Space does not allow any full analysis of religion in family life and in the relationships of kinsmen and affines. Not only the ancestor cult but witchcraft and magic are factors in them. A man's neglect of a wife or his cruelty to her may, it is believed, lead to his falling sick through her witchcraft and that of sympathetic neighbours; his relations with his father-in-law are affected by the fear that if he offends him, his father-in-law may, by magical means, kill his children, and so on.

Wider kinship groupings than the family gather at ceremonies and are recognized in the rules against incest. But there are no clans; there is no descent group continuous down the generations with a common name and definite membership. Each individual family has its own penumbra of kinsfolk, the effective kindred of a man and his son, or of two half-brothers are not all the same, while each single person is especially related by respect, affection and mutual obligations to particular kinsmen beyond his own family. Descent, as we have seen, is patrilineal except in the case of illigitimate children. A man asked for his *ekekolo* always recites first the names of his paternal forbears as far as he can remember. But if he is related through mother or grandmother to a chief he usually volunteers this fact as part of his *ekekolo*; and questions always elicit some knowledge of his mother's paternal kinsfolk and a statement that "they are my *ekekolo* too." Descendants of a common grandfather (either paternal or maternal) are to-day forbidden to marry, and no case of infringment has come to my notice; descendants of a common great-grandfather are supposed not to marry but, I am told,

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582 they sometimes do so before the relationship is discovered, and then simply drink a protective medicine but do not break the marriage. The old men speak of a now abandoned custom of preferential cross-cousin marriage.

604 The bond between a man and his mother's brother (*omwipwa*) is mainly constituted by the passage of cattle. "My real mother's brother," they say "is the one who took the bulk of the marriage-cattle which my father gave for my mother", and it is between this particular brother and a woman's eldest son that the bond is strongest. Because this brother of his mother has taken "our cattle" and married with them the young man has a certain right of making free with his property during his life, the right to receive from him one cow to set up a herd of his own with, and a residuary right of inheritance if this uncle dies childless and leaves no brothers. If his mother's brother does die without other heirs, it is only the particular wife obtained with and the particular progeny of his father's marriage-cattle that the young man can claim.

602 764 Ceremonies, and particularly funerals, are the occasions on which the effective relatives of any one family meet all together, both kinsmen and affines. I have even heard kinship defined by attendance at funerals: One man argued that he was not related to another because, though they were admittedly genealogically related they did not attend the funerals in each other's families and were not therefore really kinsmen at all.

602 572 Known blood-kinship is a common occasion of friendship, but it does not necessarily produce it, while the absence of friendship can render many of the normal kinship bonds quite inoperative. We have seen already that quarrels may destroy the relationship between half-brothers and lead to a judicial separation. On the other hand, I have observed two men meet for the first time, discover a common great-grandfather and at once become friends. A few months later the sister of one of them died and the other went to the funeral and behaved there like a close kinsman.

Proximity is another factor of great importance in the relations of kinsfolk, for while nearness of dwelling does not always make for friendship, yet a considerable distance tends to lessen it and to make attendance at funerals impossible.

606 One of the most stringent taboos in Nyakyusa life is that which separates father and daughter-in-law. A woman may never speak to, approach, or look at her husband's father. If she does it is believed that she will die, through the witchcraft of indignant neighbours, a painful and lingering death. And the taboo is extended from her own father-in-

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law to all his classificatory brothers. The normal routine of life is 606
constantly interrupted by women's avoidance of these men, they crouch and hide and make wide detours to avoid them, a man comes into a room and a woman runs out hastily, a father cannot enter his son's house while his son's wives are cooking there, ceremonies are duplicated to avoid bringing them in contact. Few people seem to realize the meaning of 606
this taboo, but occasionally a man is found who tells a story which makes 773
its function abundantly clear. It is said that an old chief, long ago before the taboo was instituted, fell in love with his son's wife and took her, and such was the horror of everyone at what he had done that this taboo was instituted. This story expresses the necessity, in a society where the old men are accustomed to take the young women as wives, of guarding in some way against the possibility of a father desiring his own son's wife for himself; more particularly perhaps because the cows for her marriage have come from him.

This taboo, separating father and daughter-in-law is one of the 606
reasons for the age-village system which we must next discuss. For in 621
Nyakyusa society father and son live in different villages.

Age-Villages

The most characteristic relationships of the Nyakyusa people are 621
those which centre in the age-village. Villages and age-groups are 561
common enough in other societies, and are familiar to all of us, but it is rare to find them combined; it is very uncommon to find, as we do among the Nyakyusa, that local groups of contemporaries live together for most or all of their lives.

Age-villages are formed by groups of men, all roughly of the same age, their wives and young children. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. The number of households in an age-village varies, but thirty is probably a fair average. Girls, as we have seen, live at home until they marry, which they normally do soon after pubery, and then each goes to the house and joins the village of her husband. But boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

(*a*) *Herd-Boys*

Between the ages of about six and eleven the boys sleep at their 857
fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time if not a very arduous occupation; the cattle are driven out about an hour after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until nearly sunset. The cattle of eight

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857 to twelve neighbours are usually herded together by their young sons; and so these boys spend all the day together for several years of their lives. This group of boys is the germ of the future age-village; it is a community with a common activity in the herding of the cattle, with a leader and with laws and customs of its own.

"When we herd cows as boys" a friend of mine told me "there is always one who is obeyed by his fellows whatever he says. No one chooses him, he gains his leadership and his prestige by bodily strength. For always, when we are all boys together among the cows, we vie with one another and dispute about going to turn back straying cattle or about fetching fire to cook the food we have brought with us. And so we start fighting, and we go on fighting until one of us beats all his fellows completely and so becomes the leader. And then it is he who sends the others to turn back straying cattle, to fetch fire and to collect firewood. And he is greatly respected. He settles quarrels too. What we quarrel about most as boys is a particular insult; one says to another: 'You are only a child, you are, I am your senior.' This is always happening and then it is the part of the one who is leader to set those two on to fight. We all stand round and watch and the one who first cries is proved the child."

The herd-boys of my own acquaintance, a group of eleven altogether, told me that besides insulting one another like this, boys often cause trouble in their little community by stealing cow-bells from one anothers' cattle and hiding them away for future use. And one day, when I visited the local herd, the leader of the herd-boys told me they had caught two boys drowning a sheep that morning so as to be able to pretend it had drowned itself by accident, and then they would have had some of the meat to eat. "We beat them very much," he told me, and he called one of the culprits to come and exhibit his weals. The leader further explained to me that such cases would not ever be reported at home, unless the culprits themselves complained to their parents that they had been unjustly beaten, "then," he said, "I should explain what they had done, and they would get beaten again!"

[861]

The time that is not spent in herding cows, in arranging and watching duels and in punishing wrongdoers, is spent in playing various games, occasionally in pitched battles with neighbouring herd-boys, and in cooking and eating small amounts of food brought from home.

857 572 Friendships formed between members of this group sometimes last a lifetime. An old man once said to me of a friend of his who had died: "We herded cows together when we were boys."

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As the boys one by one reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; and secondly they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. These two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time and normally at about the age of ten or eleven years, well before puberty. But there are cases where special circumstances put the age of one or both of these changes later; I know one boy who herds his father's cattle although he has reached puberty, because he has no younger brother old enough to take over, and there are only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. And in general I am told it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found still herding cattle. Again in one age-village the boys leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys after dark.

(*b*) *The Boys' Village*

When a fair number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well-thatched to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep. The building of the huts on this land begins, in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding the cows and sleeping at home they build minature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with a better thatch. Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's house. But he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages, economically he still belongs to that of his father, socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' homes, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat but a group of bachelors, friends of the same boys'-village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. When a boy leaves the herd-group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, but many

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621 561 others as well. Any boys' village is found to consist primarily of the sons of the members of some older village who originally gave the land for its building, but as we shall see later sons of other villages live there too.

621 342 At the beginning, when a group of boys starts a new age-village, or when boys join one already formed, they do not all have a hut to themselves, two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older, each builds for himself. The younger ones build their huts of reeds, but the older ones try to get a few bamboos from their fathers or senior relatives and build more solid houses. Married men build entirely of bamboo, but often in a boys' village you will find a compromise between bamboo and reed, both being used in the same house; and the houses of bachelors, even though they be all of bamboo, are smaller than those of married men. The technique of good building is not very difficult, and the older boys instruct and help their juniors, as they join the village, to improve the skill playfully acquired as herd-boys so as to build more substantial huts.

245 262 . The chief food of the Nyakyusa is the banana; men plant bananas immediately round their huts, though their fields are mostly at a distance. And bachelors, while they continue to eat their main meals at their parents' village, plant bananas round their own huts as well. Bananas begin to bear very quickly, sometimes within a year of planting, and so, soon after the establishment of a boys' village, its members have bananas of their own, which they cook for themselves and eat with their friends at odd times during the day. But they have as yet no fields.

864 [881] 577 There is no formal initiation of boys at puberty; but, on the other hand, the custom of leaving home and joining a boys' village is directly connected by the Nyakyusa with their ideas of decency in sexual life. They think it is perfectly all right to discuss sex openly among friends of about the same age but altogether wrong to discuss it either in the presence of, or with, their parents or those of their parents' generation. If a boy learns about love-making, in any way, from his parents the Nyakyusa think that he will not respect them properly and that he himself will be a fool. A boy must learn these things from his immediate seniors and friends. One man said to me: "If a boy after about ten years old stays at home to sleep, he is laughed at by his friends and his own parents send him away. They say: 'If he sleeps at home he will hear what his parents talk about at night, the night is always full of lewd talk; and he may even see them undressing. He will grow up a fool, with little wisdom.' You see at the boys' village" he went on to say, "the older

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boys tell all sorts of stories, especially about women, they discuss love-making and women, and tell tales of their own conquests. The younger ones listen to these things and that is all right in the boys' village, that is how we learn. But we compare in our minds and think that if a boy stays at home it is as if he listened to all this from his parents, and people always do talk lewdly at night; and that is very bad, that is foolishness.—But in the boys' village it is good for the young ones to listen, that is how children grow up."

On another occasion when I told this same man that in Europe many people thought it a good thing for boys to get sexual instruction from their parents and teachers he was shocked: "But I think it is impossible" he protested "for parents to go into detail with their children; there is too much shame on both sides. And if they did, it would damage the children's respect for them."

There is thus a correlation in this society between the age-village system at its genesis and the belief that a boy's dawning interest in sex must be informed, not by his parents, but by friends only a little older than himself.

Few men marry before twenty-five years of age, but affairs with girls begin before puberty. All affairs are related in detail to friends in the age-village, and the younger ones learn by listening; and they also learn when the older boys send them as messengers to the girls of their fancy.

Besides the more serious love affairs which are carried on in secret, groups of boys from the same age-village commonly flirt with any girls they meet on the way, and it is then that the incest taboos are learnt. If one of the boys is known to be related to one of the girls, either through a common grandfather or great-grandfather, his companions send him away: "Don't you see your sister is here? You cannot come!"

Contrary to a general belief about "primitive" societies, homosexual intercourse is common in the boys' villages, between close friends, but there is no real perversion; homosexuality is said to be always *faute de mieux*. The older men in discussion dismiss it with the tolerant word "adolescence," it is never continued after marriage, and all except the feeble-minded get married sooner or later.

But life in a boys' village also gives its members much information and wisdom unconnected with sex. There, as we have seen, boys perfect their skill in building, and there also they learn to argue and express themselves with adult fluency. It is characteristic of the Nyakyusa legal

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621 system that small cases between neighbours are always first discussed and
868 often finally settled in the presence of some friend or friends who act as
867 arbitrators, without recourse to the constituted political authorities. Small disputes about petty theft, the possession of a cloth or some coppers, the ownership of a banana stem and so on, are as frequent in the boys' village as elsewhere, and as elsewhere the people concerned often argue it out to a finish before some friend or neighbour. And by listening to such disputes, or participating in them either as judge or principal, the boys acquire rhetorical skill and some knowledge of law. In some boys' villages there is a recognized leader appointed by the political authorities of the chiefdom to settle graver disputes, in others there is not. The position of such a leader, where there is one, will be discussed later.

577 Above all the boys' village gives to its members the conversation and
621 company of more of their own contemporaries than did the group of herd boys, and company the Nyakyusa hold to be the greatest of educators. In the most explicit discourse I heard on the value of company my informant explained that cleanliness, together with rhetorical and conversational skill, were all learned in company. These are his exact words: "We say that it is by conversing with our friends that we gain wisdom; it is bad to sit quite silent always in men's company. A man who does this seems to us a fool, he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. And a man who does not spend time with other people is always dirty, he does not compare himself with any friend. We say that we learn cleanliness of body in company, the dirty ones learn from their more cleanly friends. Again if a man is accused to the chief and is unable to defend himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: 'What is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that you are so foolish?' We think that wisdom and cleanliness are the two great things learnt in company. We think it is bad to live alone far from other people, such a man learns nothing; he never learns to express himself well, to converse pleasantly with friends or to argue a case with eloquence. It is better to live with other people."

621 At first the sons of the parent village continue to join the boys'
561 village as they grow up; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are about seventeen or eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: "they are children." The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you enquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investiga-

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tion reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, continue to grow older, and after a time they begin to get married. Getting married, as we have seen, is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat their produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of man and woman, cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business.

As the members of a boys' village marry the village does not move but it expands. The houses are built ever bigger and further apart and the adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which I am best acquainted is in this transitional stage; it has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single, but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each still cultivates his father's fields, and eats at his father's home.

(c) *The Men's Village*

It is now necessary to understand the system of men's villages and the general political organization in which the boys' villages finally take their place.

The number of age-villages in one chiefdom, all the members of which are married, varies with different circumstances, but the most usual number is from six to twelve. The age system is only broken by moving or by death; when a man dies his heir usually comes and lives where the dead man was living in his age-village. There he inherits the wives, the huts, the cows and the land of his predecessor, he inherits the dead man's position in the village and often takes his personal name as well. The heir may be many years younger than his new neighbours but he is now treated as their contemporary, he sits with them at ceremonies, he shares their rights at any division of meat. The age system in the villages is also broken by moving, for a stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is consideraly older or younger than the bulk of its members. But otherwise members of a village are roughly contemporaries.

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621 In a village of married men each has one or more bamboo huts for himself and his wives, with bananas round them; his homestead is close to those of his neighbours, while the main garden-lands of the whole group are at a distance all together. Boundaries between age-villages are not always apparent to a stranger, a solid hundred acres or so of houses and bananas may turn out to consist of two or three villages, each with its own organization, and each having a block of garden-lands separate from the others.

624 In each village of married men, and usually in the older boys' villages as well, there is an appointed leader or great commoner (*olifumu*) who is originally chosen for the position by the great commoners of the senior age-villages of that chiefdom. They try to select a man who is wealthy, who comes from a respected family, who has personal ability in judging cases, who is popular with his fellows, and in the old days they looked also for qualities of courage and the ability to lead men in war. I think, though my evidence for this is as yet only circumstantial, that they also require certain believed spiritual qualities in a man, the power to recognize and to counteract aggressive witchcraft.[12] The qualities which the selectors look for in chosing a new great commoner are the clue to his functions. He is usually extremely hospitable to his neighbours, he judges their cases, he is their leader at ceremonies and in the old days he led them in war also. He represents their desires to the chief and it is through him and in consultation with him that the chief gives orders. Finally each great commoner is believed to protect his own villagers from aggressive witchcraft, to shield people and cattle from the spiritual forces of evil.

So important is this position of great commoner that legal precautions are taken "to prevent the great commoner becoming a chief" as several informants have put it to me. It is illegal to choose a great commoner from among the kinsmen of a chief, it is illegal to elect the son of a great commoner to that office in any age-village of his own contemporaries, though he may perhaps inherit the position in his father's village when his father dies.

621 The relationships which arise from common membership of an age-village are continually apparent in the Nyakyusa culture. Ceremonies and funerals are not only meeting places for relatives but also for the age-villagers; the great commoner in consultation with members of his village grants land and grazing rights to strangers who ask for them; and

[12] It is possible that this power is believed to be induced by magic later, I am not sure.

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he settles many legal disputes between his neighbours. The village is, both for men and women, the chief field of friendship, conversation and mutual hospitality; and its members recognize greater obligations towards one another than they do towards those outside. Before the coming of the Europeans the age-village was also a military unit, led by its own great commoner, in the constant fights between chiefdoms.

In most villages there are several herds of cattle which feed separately. The herd boys, as we have seen, thus form separate groups within the village, so also do their fathers; the boys are related in the common activity of herding, the men, owners of the herd, by their joint interest in it and their common fear of witchcraft.

In the relationships of villagers the belief in witchcraft is a constantly recurring factor. It is believed that certain people, both men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and their neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action whatever, without reciting any spells or performing any magical ritual at all.

Their influence, which is exercized at night in dreams, is only fully visible to those who are themselves endowed with this power; and to it is constantly attributed both sickness in men and the failure of cows to give milk. In this belief the elements of actual ill will and quarreling, of actual sickness and the failure of cows to give milk and of actual dream experiences are combined in a significant whole. Witches are of two kinds, they say, those who use their power rightly (*ava mayga*) and those who use it wrongly (*avalɔsi*). The first kind are said generally to spend their dreams in trying to prevent the others from harming those whom they hate. The good witches are the "defenders of the village," and in each village the great commoner is believed to be the first among them. In each group of men whose cows are herded together there is, again, commonly one man who has the reputation of defender of the herd, who is believed to protect the cows from the witchcraft of disgruntled individuals whether members of that small group or not. But if, at any time, a single person earns a general unpopularity in the village, whether by his pride, his meanness or by wrongdoing, then it is believed that the defenders themselves lead the spiritual attack against him, and he falls sick. Such a blast of unpopularity acting through the power of witchcraft is called the "breath of men" (*embepɔ sya vandu*); and the belief in its efficacy is one of the chief sanctions of the accepted social order of Nyakyusa life.[13]

[13] c.f. Godfrey Wilson "An African Morality" *Africa* Jan. 1936.

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The Chiefdom and Wider Groups

(*a*) *The "Coming Out"*

128 Space forbids a full description of the relationships of villagers in all their intricate detail, but a short description of the "Coming Out" (*ovosɔka*) which is at the same time the most important legal act and the most exciting ceremonial of Nyakyusa life, will, I hope, make the nature of the age-village completely clear, and will also provide us with an easy transition to the discussion of the organization of the chiefdom (*ekisu*).

622 631 I have never seen a "Coming Out" properly; on one occasion I travelled to see one and arrived just a day late when all the important action and ceremonial was over, but I have had it fully described to me at different times by several people. Every chief (*omalafyale*) is normally succeeded in his chieftainship by two sons, who divide his country between them. There are sometimes exceptions to this: in very large chiefdoms three or even four sons sometimes succeed, each taking a portion of the country; and in minor chiefdoms, that is in small chiefdoms which have come under the dominion of a neighbouring and powerful chief, only one son of the minor chief succeeds to the whole of that country.[14] But the rule is that two sons divide the country of their father. This rule worked well in the old days, for till quite lately the Nyakyusa have been an expanding people in a district too large for their needs; and the combined countries of the two sons nearly always, in the old days, covered a greater area of effective occupation than the country of their father which they had divided. Now saturation point is approaching, or has come, and the rule makes for ever smaller and smaller chiefdoms. Various forces are tending to the alteration of the rule, but it is still a vital part of the constitution. (*vide infra.*)

The "Coming Out" (*ovosɔka*) is a series of legal acts by which the country of an old chief and his great commoners is, with certain reservations, divided and handed over into the possession and control of his two sons and their respective great commoners. These legal acts are accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. It is at once the initiation of all the youth of the old chiefdom into public life, the constitution of two new [796] political units and the proclamation of two new chiefs. The "Coming Out" not only consists of a series of legal acts and public ceremonies, but of religious ritual as well, action is taken to increase the personal qualities appropriate in a chief and his great commoners by magical means.

[14] These minor chiefdoms have nothing to do with the present system of subordinating some chiefs to others (*vide infra.* sec. (b))

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When the eldest sons of his contemporaries reach the age of about 622
33-35 years the old chief is approached by his great commoners who say: 631
" The sons have grown up, let us make the ' Coming Out ' for them."
After a period of delay, for he is unwilling to relinquish his own honour and power, the old chief agrees, and the " Coming Out " takes place. His two heirs, together with all the boys and young men, whether married or single, who are sons of the old chief's contemporaries, are summoned to attend, according to their age-villages, at the old chief's principal house. When they arrive they wait there for two days, while the old great commoners discuss with their chief where to give the young men land, and whom they will select as great commoners of the young villages. We have already noted the principles which guide their choice of leaders. In many of the young village groups there are already leaders who have been previously appointed by the old great commoners, but these leaders are, I am told, only temporary, they are never reappointed at the " Coming Out ; " at the " Coming Out " " everything is made new," the boundaries of the young age-villages are redrawn, and new great commoners appointed in them ; only the groups of young men themselves remain unchanged.

The legal action which now takes place comprizes three events: firstly the public selection of new great commoners, secondly the public appearance and the public recognition of the two young chiefs, and thirdly the giving of land to the young age villages.

When the old men have made up their minds, one of them goes 624
among the crowd of young men and catches hold of those they have chosen in order of their seniority: First the one who is to be leader of the senior village of the first son of the old chief, then the leader of the senior village of his second son, then the leader of the next senior village of the first son, and so on. There are usually eight age-villages of young men, of these four will belong to the chiefdom of the first son, four to that of the second. The eight new great commoners are now publicly known, four in each new chiefdom.

The next stage of the action is the one from which the whole institu- 622
tion takes its name; the " Coming Out." The two young chiefs are secluded for a few hours in the hut of the old chief's first wife, there they receive various forms of magical treatment and when it is finished, "then," to quote the words of a great commoner who told me about his own [789]
coming out, " the director of ceremonies said: ' Get up ! ' the chiefs got up, and came out of the house to us, and we, the crowd of young men, said: ' Come on ! ' and welcomed them. Then we all ran shouting and calling the war cry towards the next chiefdom. In the old days we would

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622 have invaded that country for cows and brought them back and eaten them at the new huts which we built next. But that is finished now." In this way the new chiefs are shown to their people.

631 Finally the young men are told exactly where to go and build, and the boundaries between the new chiefdoms and the villages of each are fixed; the old boys' villages are abandoned and the houses gradually pulled down and put up in their new places. At first the men of the four age-villages of each young chief just put up rough shelters to sleep in, all together on the place where the senior age-village of each new chiefdom will later be built, but after a month or two they separate, each village to its own place, and there they build their houses.

The land is now their own, they are no longer members of boys' villages, living on land given them at the side of the parent villages by their fathers, they are owners of the soil, full citizens, with chief and great commoners to rule them.

(*b*) *Organization and Life of a Single Chiefdom*

622 583 A few months after the "Coming Out" each of the two young chiefs marries two wives. He may be married already, but the two whom he now takes rank as his great wives (*avehe avakolombu*) and their sons are his two heirs in the chieftainship. Young girls, daughters of neighbouring chiefs, are carried off with a show of force from their fathers' homes by the young chief's men, who, themselves, later send cows to regularize the position. The two great wives are thus married, not with the cows of their husband, but with those of the men whose sons their sons will one day rule.

622 585 881 Girls are carried off who are just about to reach puberty, and they stay at the house of one of the men of the old chief until their periods begin. When both have reached puberty they are initiated, not at their fathers' houses, but in the country of their husband, both together. At their initiation, the old men and women of the country (contemporaries of the old, retiring, chief) play the part normally played by a girl's parents and their neighbours, while the young chief and his men take the usual part of a husband and his friends. And then, after the ceremonies are over, the two girls are given to the young chief as his wives. Houses are built for them separately: in the senior age-village of the new chiefdom for the first wife, in the next senior village for the second wife; and in this separation of dwelling place is already apparent the future division of the chiefdom between their sons.

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Within the chiefdom, and among the wives and children of the chief, two " sides " (*embafu*) are recognized. In the normal country there are, at its beginning, two age-villages and half the wives of the chief on either side ; for the junior wives, as they are married, are attached in a recognized order of seniority to one or the other of the two great wives, and have their own houses near them. This distinction of two sides is important in succession. If one of the two great wives bears no son, then the great commoners of the chiefdom often publicly accept the son of the next senior wife on that side as the heir to that half of the country ; and, even if they do not do so during the old chief's lifetime, such a man has always a strong claim to the succession. And the two heirs each rank as head of one side of their father's family when he and his full-brothers are all dead.

Between the time of the two young chiefs' " Coming Out " and their own father's death there is, between him and them, a delicate balance of prestige and power. Each of the three, traditionally, has political authority in his own age-villages, but appeals in difficult cases may be taken from either of the young chiefs and their great commoners to the old chief and his great commoners, while the religious duties of chieftanship are exercized entirely by the old chief. During this transition period the functions of chieftanship are divided between three men, each with his own great commoners to assist him. It is necessary to understand that an old chief is believed usually to die soon after the " Coming Out " of his sons. The " breath " (i.e. witchcraft) of the people is believed to kill him because men love his sons rather than himself. When I asked about one chief (Mwakalukwa) who did not die till about fifteen years after the " Coming Out " of his sons, I was told that his was an exceptional case ; " The people loved him very much because he helped them with the Government." None the less such exceptions are not unusual. But, in any case, it is commonly said that " after his sons' ' Coming Out ' the old chief's power decreases, while that of his sons increases." When he dies his wives and cows are inheried by his full-brother, and to this brother also passes the religious leadership of both the two new chiefdoms, but all general or political power now normally[15] passes to the two sons. The period of transition is over, and the control of the age-villages of old men now passes to the two young chiefs and their great commoners, half to each side. The great commoners of the old chief, relinquishing most of their secular functions to their successors, enter upon new religious duties as priests in the worship of the chief who has just died, and this priesthood, as we shall see, they hand on to their

[15] Certain recent events have altered the working of this rule in some chiefdoms. (*vide infra.*)

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631 sons. To the dead chief's full-brother go his wives and cattle, so that property and power are usually inherited separately; in all the cases which I have investigated however, this brother has himself given some of the cows to the young chiefs, but the reasons for his action are still obscure to me. In so far as the dead chief's brother is still the religious head of both chiefdoms the functions of chieftanship may be said still to be divided; but all the secular functions are now normally exercized by the young chiefs. And the religious functions also fall to them when all their father's full-brothers are dead.

Political authority is the general authority of one or more persons within a community, whether local or nomadic, which goes beyond the bounds of a single family; a leadership confined to no one type of behaviour, but ordering a variety of social activities. Such an authority is wielded by a Nyakyusa chief, together with his great commoners, in his own chiefdom. There a number of legal, economic, religious[16] and ceremonial activities are controlled by them; and there, before the coming of the Europeans, they had military leadership also. But before that event no man had any wide political authority beyond the single chiefdom. The chiefs of Lubaga[17] had a far-reaching religious pre-eminence, but no general or political influence at all beyond their own country.

622a 578 The only extensions of political power beyond a single chiefdom before European times, as far as I know, arose from the rivalry of brother chiefs. The division of an old chief's country into two was not always accepted by the young men concerned; quarrels and fighting between them were common, and the position established at the "Coming Out" was sometimes modified by war. If one of the two decisively defeated the other, he took all his brother's cows and reduced him to a subordinate position. The land of the Nyakyusa is full of such minor chiefdoms; by the clerks who collect tax they are described as "villages," but they are 622 radically different from villages in their constitution. For, while they often consist only of a few score families, they are themselves articulated into age-villages and have at their head, not an elected great commoner (*olifumu*) but a hereditary chief (*omalafyale*). A minor chief marries in the ordinary way, like a commoner, and only one of his sons inherits his chieftanship; while his chiefdom, owing to its small size, is often simply divided into two villages, one for the old, one for the young men. To-day his position carries with it neither wealth nor power; he has some authority over his own people, but less than the great commoners of his powerful

[16] I am now speaking of the position of a chief after his father and all his father's full-brothers are dead, and before his own sons have "come out."
[17] *Vide infra*, sec: (c)

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kinsman. Though some of the reasons for his subordination are to be found in modern conditions, it is clear that many of the factors have always operated.

Wars did not only occur between brothers; but when one chief defeated another who was more distantly related to him, he did not, apparently ever, reduce him to a minor position: He either took his cows and then left him alone, or killed him and set up a brother of his own as an independent though allied chief, or else, more rarely, killed him, took over the country and directly incorporated it in his own. So that, apart from the subordination of a defeated brother and his heirs, political authority always stopped at the boundaries of each separate chiefdom.[16]

The traditionally independent chiefdoms to-day vary in numbers from 100 to about 3,000 adult men.

The coming of the German Administration in 1893 introduced a paramount political authority, for the first time, in the persons of European officials; while in 1926, a generation later, the British Administration created new Native Authorities under the District Officer and superior to the chiefs. The traditionally independent chiefs were grouped together in eleven court districts, in each district a "Native Court" was set up, consisting of the various chiefs and their great commoners, under the hereditary presidency of one of the chiefs, who thereby became senior to all the others in that court district. Salaries for chiefs have been introduced, and the senior chiefs receive far higher salaries than the others; while the meetings of each Court are always held in the territory of the senior chief (*omalafyale oŋkolomba*); and to it has now been transferred a great deal of the legal business which, before 1926, was transacted by each chief sitting with his own great commoners in his own chiefdom. The chiefs themselves were consulted in the selection of the Court Presidents, and those chosen were normally the chiefs with the greatest number of men in each particular court district.

In this account the term *senior chief* (*omalafyale oŋkolomba*) denotes the President of a Native Court, *chief* (*omalafyale*) means one of the traditionally independent chiefs, while *minor chief* (*omalafyale omnandi*) means one of the subordinate chiefs, often with only 40-60 men under him.

The introduction of Courts and salaries has brought an entirely new element into the relationship between old and young chiefs (*vide*

[16] Among the Konde of Nyasaland, I am told, there was a paramount chief Kyungu, with a far-reaching political authority; but there was no such chief among the Nyakyusa.

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636 177 578 *supra*). Only one of them can receive the salary and they commonly dispute about it. Quarrels are particularly frequent over the position of senior chief, for the presidency of a Court carries with it a relatively large salary. Old senior chiefs cling to the position long after their sons have "come out" and when they die their full-brothers still dispute the position with the sons because of the salary involved. Such a situation could not have arisen before 1926, for then there was no comparable issue between them.

636 622 177 And the introduction of salaries has also had a most profound effect upon the relative status of the two young chiefs who "come out" together. When an ordinary chief, with a small salary, dies the Government recognizes the first son alone as chief and pays the whole salary to him. This reduces the second son to the position of a minor chief as effectively as a defeat in war might have done in the old days. But, while the action of warfare only occasionally led to the subordination of one of the brothers, this action of the Government does so invariably, and always subordinates the younger brother. When a senior chief dies, on the other hand, the salary is usually divided: the bulk of it goes to the first son, together with the position of senior chief, while to the second son is given the salary of an ordinary chief.

554 622 As the prestige and authority of a father in his family, or of a man among his neighbours, is closely connected with his wealth on the one hand, and with his believed religious powers on the other, so also the status of a chief among his people. He has more cows, more wives, more food than other men; he is spiritually responsible for the fertility of the land, the women and the cattle of his chiefdom. But he is no autocrat, and all his public functions require for their exercise the co-operation of his great commoners.

622 595 Polygyny is, above all, the mark of a chief. Few commoners have more than five or six wives, but a chief frequently marries fifteen, thirty, fifty or even more; his wives weed and plant the fields which their unmarried sons hoe, and there is plenty of food for guests. Chiefs themselves hoe when they have time, and often they employ a poor man to hoe for them as well, rewarding him after a year or two with a cow. It is not [637] possible for one man to satisfy so many women sexually, and it is generally said that every chief's wife, save the five or six who are his favourites, has a lover. But intrigues must be carried on with care, for their discovery means a great public scandal.

The extent of a chief's polygyny is conditioned by his control of cattle, and his income in cattle is derived mainly from inheritance and the

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marriages of his kinswomen. When his father dies his father's wives and cows pass to his father's full-brother, but they come to him and his brother eventually when this man dies. While, if the young chiefs have "come out" it is common for their father's brother to hand over some, or even the bulk of the cattle, to them before his own death. And in his own half of the family, among his siblings and half-siblings on that side, a chief has far greater rights both of inheritance and of receiving marriage-cattle, than those possessed by the senior son of a commoner. So much is clear from my evidence, but it is not yet sufficiently detailed for an exact statement of rules.

Before 1893 fighting between chiefdoms was common and, except between brother chiefs, the usual aim of fighting was, not conquest, but cows; wars were generally just cattle raids. And a substantial proportion of the cows captured in a successful raid went to increase the herds of the chief. This last source of income is now supplied by Government salaries, which vary from 5/- to £15 a month.[1] The price of a cow is £2; but many shillings are spent on clothes, bicycles and beer, as well as on cows.

A chief, like any other rich man, maintains his prestige by hospitality, he constantly entertains his more notable subjects with beer, at the ceremonies of his family all his people gather in their age-villages and he kills cattle for them to eat. Chiefs seldom nowadays kill cattle except on ceremonial occasions, but in the old days of warfare they used also, I am told, to entertain their subjects with meat from time to time, in order to keep up their spirits for fighting. History is full of stories of Nyakyusa chiefs who attracted many men to their countries, and so gained great military strength, by the generosity and abundance of their feasts.

Every time a man or woman dies, a message must be sent to the chief, and at the burial he is given the whole breast and ribs (*akakasa*) of one of the cows which are killed by the family of the dead person at that time. He has the right to take food or milk from any of his subjects if he has need of it; but he cannot take any man's beast without later returning another to him.

Apart from the now abandoned pursuit of cattle raiding the only profitable enterprises in which the members of a whole chiefdom jointly participate are those of hunting and fishing; in some chiefdoms, but not

[1] Salaries above £5 a month are only paid to senior chiefs. No minor chief gets a Government salary, nor do great-commoners. The local value of money is shown (a) by the tax (1/- p.a.), (b) by the wages of unskilled labour (6/- to 8/- p.m.)

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631
476 all, hunting is organized like warfare and fishing is a joint endeavour, both ordered by the chief.

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622 Every chief has a title of ownership (*obwene nakya*) to the land of his chiefdom and can evict any man he pleases, (giving him another plot), if he wishes to build there himself; but his people also have titles of ownership to it, both collectively, under the leadership of the great commoners, and individually, each man to his own ground. It is the great commoners who, in consultation with their neighbours, give to the sons of each village land on which to build; it is they who, together, finally fix the boundaries of the young men's villages at their "Coming Out;" it is they who, again in consultation with their neighbours, grant land to strangers who ask for it, though they must notify the chief and get his approval before doing so.

627
692 As the single great commoners settle disputes within their own villages so the chief and great commoners together hear and decide cases within the chiefdom. Many of these legal actions are now settled in the Courts, but not all of them; and, even when cases are going to Court, preliminary hearings commonly take place before the chief, first. Cases are conducted and witnesses interrogated by chief and great commoners together, and the decision which the chief pronounces is an expression of their general opinion.

554
624 Among the great commoners there is an order of seniority. The leaders of the two senior age-villages of the chief's own men play a prominent part at his "Coming Out," they each have a pre-eminent authority in one side of his chiefdom, and the other great commoners rank as their juniors, some on one side, some on the other. In the old days the two senior great commoners each led a whole side of the chiefdom in war.

622
754 The two most effective checks on the power of a chief are migration and witchcraft. Military strength used to depend upon the number of a chief's adherents, to-day the scale of his salary is similarly dependent; men are quite free to move, and there is a constant flow of adherents from unpopular to popular chiefs. But unpopularity is most feared in its spiritual form of witchcraft. We have seen already that an adverse current of opinion is believed to act invisibly, as the "breath of men," against an unpopular member of a village and to make him sick. So also the adverse opinion of a single village or of a whole chiefdom is believed to have power against a chief, to bring sickness or even death upon him. As in the single village, so in the whole chiefdom the great commoners are the prime sources of this spiritual power; they are believed severally to protect the members of their own villages and jointly to protect their

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chief from the wanton attacks of witches; but if ever there is a just ground of offence they are believed to join their own power of witchcraft in the general attack. I know one chief who dare not give a judgement in a dispute between two of his villages for fear of the indignant witchcraft of the losing side. And a general unpopularity is believed always to lead, sooner or later to a chief's death.

Chiefs also, like other men, fear the use of sorcery (*i.e.* destructive magic) against them, and use a number of protective "medicines" (i.e. materials of magic) to protect themselves from it. They also use powerful "medicines" to give themselves personal impressiveness, prestige and authority among their people.

While in the families of commoners an ancestral spirit is only believed to affect the lives of his own descendants, the ancestors of a chief, on the other hand, are supposed to influence, for good or ill, the fortunes of whole chiefdoms. Rain and good crops, the fertility of women and cattle are dependent upon their good will, which in its turn is believed to depend upon a recurrent sacrifice of cows. And for this sacrifice the chiefs, their living descendants, are responsible.[1] But, owing to the continuous division of chiefdoms every generation, several chiefs are concerned in each sacrifice; every dead chief is a source of misfortune or of blessing in the countries of all his direct descendants. And so the discussion of this part of the Nyakyusa religion leads us to the investigation of the groups which extend beyond the boundaries of a single chiefdom.

(c) *Groups wider than the Chiefdom*

When a chief dies he is buried near the house of his senior great wife and trees are planted on his grave. The trees grow and form a sacred grove (*ilinyete*) hedged by taboos. Each of these groves is at first the religious centre of two, later of a number of chiefdoms, and in them the sacrifices are made. Responsibility for finding the cow for sacrifice in a particular grove rests with one of the living chiefs concerned, but responsibility for initiating the ritual and performing it lies not only with the chiefs but also with the hereditary priests (*amapyapya*) in each chiefdom. These hereditary priests are descended, some from the great commoners of the dead chief who is buried in that particular grove, some from his half-brothers. The ritual is esoteric, there is no gathering of the people at the sacrifice, and only chiefs and those with hereditary priesthoods

[1] I am speaking here of the religious customs of the Nyakyusa proper and the Ngonde people. I believe those of the Kukwe and Mwamba are very similar, but I have not studied them in detail.

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779 come to it. But, on the other hand, everyone knows when a sacrifice is
778 taking place, and, in spite of the influence of missions, most people in the
793 pagan community believe in its efficacy.

782 Sacrifices are prompted either by actual misfortune or by prophecies
787 of it. The four sacrifices which I have seen myself were all stimulated by an actual shortage of food, and the hereditary priests have often told me that "now-a-days the chiefs do not listen to us until hunger comes." But, traditionally, sacrifices are said to have been usually prompted by prophecies of coming misfortune which was then averted by them. In each chiefdom the ruling great commoners, the hereditary priests and some private persons as well are believed to have the power of dreaming of misfortune (*okokunguluka*) before it comes. And the chiefs are said always to have listened to these dreams, formerly, and to have acted upon them.

778 Among the groves there is an order of seniority; the older the grove
173 the more chiefdoms are concerned in the sacrifices there. And in Selya is the most important grove of all—Lubaga. All the chiefdoms of Selya, many of the Nyakyusa proper and even some of the neighbouring chiefdoms of the Mwamba are traditionally concerned in its sacrifices. Lubaga, the Nyakyusa say, is the grove of Lwembe, one of the original chiefs who came down the Livingstone Mountains from the East, eight or nine generations ago; and from him all the present Selya chiefs are descended. The ancestor of the chiefs of the Nyakyusa proper was a brother of Lwembe; and though the Kukwe and Mwamba chiefs are not related, yet those of the Mwamba who are nearest to Lubaga used to send cows there for sacrifice as well, because of the great reputation that this grove had.

622 Sacrifices are still made in the country of the chief of Lubaga
782 (Mwakisisya) for all the surrounding chiefdoms, but the full ritual has not been carried out for fourty years. Traditionally each chief of Lubaga was ritually installed into a position somewhat resembling that of Sir James Frazer's "Divine Kings," a position hedged with taboos, in which not only the sacrifices he made to Lwembe but his own health and fertility also were believed to be intimately connected with the prosperity of his own and neighbouring chiefdoms. But the present chief has never been properly installed, nor was his father before him. The sacrifices at Lubaga are believed to benefit not only the Nyakyusa but also the next
[78] tribe to the East, the Kinga, who live on the heights of the Livingstone Mountains; for Lwembe, they say, was born a Kinga and moved down the mountains to Lubaga, taking the fertility of the soil with him. And

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And every year two hereditary Kinga priests come a three days journey from their own country to participate in the sacrifice of a black cow to the spirits of Lwembe and his descendants.

Down by Lake Nyasa, in the extreme South East of the Nyakyusa district, there is another equally sacred spot where sacrifices were, and believe still are[21] made to Kyala, a younger brother of Lwembe.

The Christians and the Moslems form other religious groups which transcend the boundaries of a single chiefdom, but an examination of the Nyakyusa Christian and Moslem communities is beyond the scope of this paper.

The political group which is constituted by a Court district, though only ten years old, is of great importance in Nyakyusa society; but here again the detailed examination of its organization and the relationships of its members is beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusion: Culture and Society

The aim of sociology is to describe single forms of society fully and, in comparison with one another, to explain them completely, in so far as reasons can be found within this particular scientific field. Neither full description nor complete explanation of Nyakyusa society has here been attempted: many important facts have been omitted from the account, irregularities of detail have been slurred over, the connections of fact have been only occasionally and sketchily established, and no systematic comparison of this unit with others has been made at all.

But the method of this paper has involved an analysis, summary and general though it has been, of the nature of some of the many institutions in which the Nyakyusa meet, of some of the actual elements in their relationships with one another. It is in their dealings with the earth and their cattle, with the spirits and with men who break the law, in their discussions and arguments, their ceremonial feasts, their giving and receiving, in their loves and hates and in their admiration and mockery of one another that they forever make and remake their own human relationships.

Culture is the matter of which society is the form; inseparable in fact they are only intelligible together. No two men can be related unless they both do something and unless their activities are somehow connected. Nor can either escape relationship with his fellow if what

[21] I have not yet been there to investigate.

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121 one does in any way affects the other's behaviour. "Culture" is but a general term for all the connected activities of a group of people through which they enter into relationships, that is into society, with one another. And since culture is nothing but the activities which bind men wittingly or unwittingly together, it is only through a systematic investigation of culture that we can reach any understanding at all of human bonds.

Every cultural activity must have some point, some meaning, for the actors themselves[22] or they would not undertake it; it must have some value, some emotional appeal, some intellectual significance for them. This meaning is not the sole reason for their behaviour but it is one among other reasons. And, as what they do is an occasion of relationship with one another, so the meaning of what they do is also one of the reasons for the existence of their society in that particular situation.

Now the specific meaning of a cultural activity to the actors is not always a direct interest in one another or in human relationships as such, although sometimes, as in love making or in a movement for social reform, it may be so. In their behaviour men commonly look to some non-social end and create society half unwittingly on the way. When the Nyakyusa sacrifice a cow to the spirits of dead chiefs, or hoe their fields, or drink, or discuss the cause of a sickness, the specific reasons for their behaviour are to be found in values, ideas and feelings connected with health, food, drink, sickness and misfortune in general; and it is, in large part, their concern with these things that leads them to enter into society with one another. Human relationships are largely determined by the consequences, implications, and associations of absorbing pursuits whose immediate interest is not social, they are only in part the specific ends of effort, the direct objects of thought and feeling.

But apart from men's actual pursuits society has no existence anywhere, it can only be found in the material events of culture, at particular places and times; and only through a systematic analysis of the meanings and implications of those events can society be understood.

What we have just said involves a radical criticism of the Durkheimian method in social science; for that method always stops short of any thorough analysis of the manifold meanings and implications of cultural institutions, and so can never reveal the true nature of society which only exists in them. The Durkheimian's "social integration" or "solidarity" is a system of human relationships with only emotional

[22] Not for all the actors, some of whom usually behave under the compulsion of sanctions, but for the majority of those responsible for the activity's continuance.

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elements, void of all intelligible occasions of existence, a bloodless fiction, an insignificant idea.

Since every cultural activity is in part determined by external conditions of biology, climate, geography and historical circumstance, these conditions are also partial determinants of the human relationships involved in it. But the values, opinions and emotions current in any society are very largely independent of external conditions and cannot be deduced from them. And it is these aims, ideas and feelings which, through the activities to which they give point, and through the consequences, associations and implications of these activities provide the cultural conditions for each particular form of human society.

Thus culture, the matter, conditions the form of society which exists in it; but the reverse is equally true, for every cultural activity is itself conditioned and made possible by the system of human relationships of which the society in question consists. Culture has no independent reality, it is always together with and at every moment conditioned by the relationships of people, for it is nothing but their connected behaviour. The form in which men act, in which they express their feelings and understand their world is inevitably and always conditioned by their relationships with one another. Into the meaning of cultural activities human relationships only occasionally enter as the immediate centre of the actors' interest, but they invariably enter as the context in which alone that meaning can exist. When a Nyakyusa hoes his fields he is directly seeking food and his action has thus an interest which is not at that moment specifically social, none the less it is socially conditioned in its entirety. The time and energy he puts into hoeing depend upon his need of food, which in turn largely depends upon the number of his wives and children, his responsibilities to them and the prestige that he has acquired or that he wishes to acquire for hospitality among his neighbours. And his every action, his every statement, his every overt expression of feeling is likewise socially conditioned.

A true sociological method is thus a systematic investigation of the mutual connections of culture and society, an attempt to show how the material and the form of social life forever condition each other. It is only in this way that we can reach understanding of the separate units of human society and of the universal laws which all alike fulfill.